



House of Representatives

General Assembly

File No. 352

February Session, 2008

House Bill No. 5909

House of Representatives, April 1, 2008

The Committee on Human Services reported through REP. VILLANO of the 91st Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the bill ought to pass.

***AN ACT CONCERNING THE ELIMINATION OF TIME LIMITS FOR
TRANSITIONAL INDIVIDUALS IN THE STATE-ADMINISTERED
GENERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.***

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Subsection (d) of section 17b-191 of the general statutes is
2 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective*
3 *October 1, 2008*):

4 (d) [Cash assistance to a transitional individual shall be limited to a
5 twenty-four-month period of eligibility with no more than ten months
6 of assistance in the first twelve months of eligibility and no more than
7 six months of assistance in the second twelve months of eligibility,
8 except that such durational limits shall not apply to a transitional
9 individual not classified as such solely due to mental illness or
10 substance abuse or to a transitional individual who has a dependent
11 child under eighteen years of age.] Prior to or upon discontinuance of
12 assistance, a person previously determined to be a transitional
13 individual may petition the commissioner to review the determination

14 of his or her status. In such review, the commissioner shall consider
15 factors, including, but not limited to: (1) Age; (2) education; (3)
16 vocational training; (4) mental and physical health; and (5)
17 employment history and shall make a determination of such person's
18 ability to obtain gainful employment. [Upon determination by the
19 commissioner that a transitional individual is not unemployable, the
20 person shall be ineligible to receive cash assistance for one year, unless
21 such person produces medical verification of a substantial
22 deterioration in his or her physical or mental condition or a new
23 condition of such severity and duration that it precludes employment
24 for a period of at least six months.]

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:

Section 1	October 1, 2008	17b-191(d)
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HS *Joint Favorable*

The following fiscal impact statement and bill analysis are prepared for the benefit of members of the General Assembly, solely for the purpose of information, summarization, and explanation, and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose:

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact: None

Municipal Impact: None

Explanation

This bill eliminates an obsolete statutory reference to transitional benefits under the State Administered General Assistance (SAGA) program under the Department of Social Services (DSS). The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, rather than DSS, has provided benefits to this population since programmatic changes were made in 1998. As DSS no longer provides transitional benefits to this population, this change will have no fiscal impact.

The Out Years

State Impact: None

Municipal Impact: None

OLR Bill Analysis**HB 5909*****AN ACT CONCERNING THE ELIMINATION OF TIME LIMITS FOR TRANSITIONAL INDIVIDUALS IN THE STATE-ADMINISTERED GENERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.*****SUMMARY:**

This bill deletes obsolete references to time limits for certain individuals eligible for cash assistance from the Department of Social Services (DSS) under the State-Administered General Assistance (SAGA) program who would otherwise be considered “transitionally” eligible for benefits. The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services has provided assistance to these individuals for 10 years.

In general, SAGA cash assistance is available only to individuals who are “unemployable” or “transitional.” Benefits are \$200 per month for unemployable people and transitional recipients who must pay for their shelter. Transitional recipients who do not pay for shelter receive \$50 per month.

The bill also makes a technical change.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2008

SAGA — TRANSITIONAL ELIGIBILITY

Under current law, individuals who meet the criteria for this eligibility category and who are not classified as such solely due to mental illness or substance abuse are eligible for SAGA cash assistance for as long as they meet the program’s eligibility criteria (e.g., disability).

The law defines someone as transitionally eligible if he or she

1. has (a) a documented physical or mental impairment that

prevents employment and is expected to last at least two, but less than six, months and (b) a recent connection to the labor force or

2. has a determination of employability or disability pending and provides medical documentation of a severe physical or mental impairment expected to last at least six months.

If the impairment is expected to last for at least six months, DSS conducts a medical review to determine whether the individual should be considered unemployable (see BACKGROUND) based on a potentially permanent condition.

Under current law, individuals deemed transitional solely on the basis of mental illness or substance abuse are subject to time limits: a 24-month eligibility period, with no more than 10 months of assistance in the first 12 months of eligibility and a maximum of six months of assistance in the second year.

In 1997, the state took over administration of the General Assistance program and DMHAS assumed responsibility for meeting the basic needs of people who had substance abuse or mental illness problems and who would have otherwise been classified as transitionally eligible for SAGA cash solely based on either of these conditions. Consequently, DSS has not been providing cash assistance to them. Thus, the time limits have no meaning.

BACKGROUND

Unemployable Definition

The SAGA law defines someone as “unemployable” if he or she:

1. is under age 16 or over age 64, or older than 54 with a history of chronic unemployment;
2. has a physical or mental impairment expected to last at least six months and prohibiting him or her from working or participating in an education, training, or other work-readiness

program, as the DSS commissioner determines;

3. is waiting to receive federal Supplemental Security Income benefits or financial assistance from another program DSS administers;
4. is needed to care for a child under two or an incapacitated child or spouse;
5. is a full-time high school student; or
6. is a VISTA volunteer.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Human Services Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 19 Nay 0 (03/13/2008)